



What My Pets Teach Me

by Lori Hartwell, RSN President



I have an African Grey Parrot named Johnny; he's all gray with a beautiful red tail. He's a

precise listener who picks up every vocal inflection, and he has an uncanny ability to mimic exactly what he hears. For example, he can imitate perfectly the car alarm, a cat's meow, and television commercial slogans like "Milk Does a Body Good."



Sometimes I think I hear the phone ringing, then I realize it's only Johnny. He follows the ring with an impersonation of me answering (and it really sounds like me!). It goes something like this: "Ringgg. Hello, whatchadoin'? Uh huh... uh huh... yeah... uh huh..."

Could you hold on for a second? Beep." (He does call waiting too.) Needless to say, having Johnny around is like tape-recording my entire life.

My dogs Max, a black poodle, and Chloe, a cockapoo, provide me with lots of unconditional love. They're always happy



and know how to use their charm to get what they want. Sitting up on their hind legs and looking at me with those big brown eyes is a favorite way to get my attention. They

know that you get more bees with honey than with vinegar.

My cats Jack and Cali also have their unique lessons to teach. They're very independent and don't need much reassurance. They take time to look for and enjoy the little things in life: a small bug walking across the floor, a thread hanging from my jacket, or a spider spinning a web. They know the importance of taking a nap and basking in the sun.



All of my animals get along and have fun playing together. In the morning, while I'm sitting at my dining room table drinking coffee

and reading the paper, I'm often treated to a game of "catch me if you can." The cats run, the dogs chase

them, and "safe" is in the bathtub. Johnny is the referee and often yells, "You are bad, get outside," followed by "Go potty." He's definitely in charge of this menagerie, often reminding us of it by saying, "I'm the boss."

My pets are an example to me of how to live. They teach me to listen and to be kind and loving no matter what. As I watch them play together and get along even though they're different, I realize that it's easier to accept one another if we have a common goal. They also remind me to pay attention to details, to take care of myself, and to live in the moment.

But the most important thing my pets have taught me is to *just have fun!*

Chronically Yours,

Lori Hartwell

President & Founder
of the Renal Support Network

weKAN Live & Give is a publication of the Renal Support Network, a patient-run nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify and meet the non-medical needs of those affected by chronic kidney disease.

weKAN Patient Activists serve to mobilize, educate, motivate, and empower fellow chronic kidney disease survivors to advocate for themselves and for one another. Together we *can* make a difference.

Newsletter Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Lori Hartwell

Managing Editor; Layout & Design

Shari Gilford

Editorial Coordinator

Kathe LeBeau

Distribution

Renal Support Network

Contact Information

Renal Support Network

818-543-0896 or 866-903-1728 Toll Free
9 AM-5 PM Pacific Time

Submissions, Newsletter Business

info@RSNhope.org, or mail to RSN

Address Changes & Distribution

Live & Give Distribution Dept.
Renal Support Network
1311 N. Maryland Ave.
Glendale, CA 91207
info@RSNhope.org

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